United Nations A/C.1/54/PV.17

General Assembly
Fifty-fourth Session

Official Records

First Committee
17th Meeting
Wednesday, 27 October 1999, 3 p.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. González ..... (Chile)

The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

Agenda items 64, 65 and 67 to 85 (*continued*)

Thematic discussion on item subjects; introduction and consideration of all draft resolutions submitted under all disarmament and international security items

Mr. Seibert (Germany): I have the honour to introduce, on behalf of the sponsors, the draft resolution contained in document A/C.1/54/L.20, on agenda item 76 (j), "Consolidation of peace through practical disarmament measures". The draft resolution is so far sponsored by 72 Member States – those listed in the document plus Israel, Brazil and Hungary.

We attach particular importance to the fact that the co-sponsorship once again bridges the usual regional group lines and involves Member States from virtually all regions of the globe; it has steadily increased from 42 in 1996 to over 70 this year. I should like to express special thanks to all the sponsors.

The draft resolution "Consolidation of peace through practical disarmament measures" was first introduced in 1996, when our delegation submitted what became resolution 51/45 N, which was adopted by the General Assembly without a vote and was later included in the deliberations of the Disarmament Commission.

As reiterated in the second preambular paragraph, the basic idea is to focus the First Committee's attention, in a more integrated manner, on the relevance of certain practical disarmament measures for the consolidation of peace in post-conflict environments. As experience has shown, such measures as arms control, particularly with regard to small arms and light weapons, confidence-building, demobilization, reintegration of former combatants, demining and conversion, are often prerequisites to maintaining and consolidating peace and security and thus providing a basis for effective rehabilitation and socio-economic development in areas that have suffered from conflict. The scope of resolution 51/45 N remains unchanged in the new draft.

The importance of practical disarmament measures has received growing recognition from the international community in many respects. "Consolidation of peace through practical disarmament measures" remains an important item on the United Nations agenda.

The past 12 months have been particularly encouraging for this German initiative. Security Council meetings were dedicated to post-conflict peace-building, in December 1998, and to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants in peace-keeping environments, in July 1992.

Two important documents have been issued since last year: the final report (A/54/258) of the Group of Governmental Experts on Small Arms, in August 1999, and the guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace, adopted by the Disarmament Commission in April 1999, to be found in document A/54/42, annex III.

Let me also mention the increasing activities by the Group of Interested States. Since its establishment on 4

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March 1998 — as a response to the Secretary-General's wish for such a group to facilitate effective implementation of practical disarmament measures – the Group has held eight meetings and supported a variety of projects, particularly in Cameroon, Guatemala and Albania, and, hopefully, soon it will support projects in Bolivia, the Niger, Guinea-Bissau and Papua New Guinea.

In doing so, the Group has tried to strengthen international cooperation in the field of peace consolidation, especially as undertaken by affected States themselves. The Group has already become, in close cooperation with the Department for Disarmament Affairs, a focal point where delegations can meet to exchange information about their various activities in the field of practical disarmament for the benefit of others and for the sake of better coordination. Maybe most important, the Group tries to directly assist affected countries in their practical disarmament efforts by jointly sponsoring those projects.

This year's draft in large part follows the wording of previous years. Let me therefore focus on highlighting the changes to last year's text.

At the centre of this year's draft resolution is the intention to keep up the momentum and build upon the progress achieved so far. We want to encourage the Group's work, and therefore, in operative paragraph 4, welcome the activities of the Group of Interested States and invite it to continue its work.

The fifth preambular paragraph notes the important contribution of the Secretary-General's report prepared with the assistance of the Group of Governmental Experts on Small Arms.

Operative paragraph 1 welcomes the adoption by consensus of the Disarmament Commission's guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, and operative paragraph 2 stresses their particular relevance in the context of our draft resolution.

With these basic explanatory remarks, I put the draft resolution before the Committee. Extensive consultations with the sponsors, but also with other delegations, were conducted prior to the submission of the draft, in an effort to again secure consensus on this draft resolution. In keeping with tradition, I trust that the draft will again be adopted without a vote. We invite all delegations to join a consensus on this draft resolution.

Mr. Nene (South Africa): As this is my first opportunity to speak, I wish to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship and to assure you of my delegation's support and cooperation.

It is a pleasure for my delegation to introduce five draft resolutions and one draft decision on behalf of the member States of the Non-Aligned Movement. These draft resolutions and the draft decision will be considered under agenda items 69, 76, 77 and 84.

First, I would like to introduce the draft resolution entitled "Implementation of the Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace", circulated in document A/C.1/54/L.45. The draft resolution calls for the participation of all permanent members of the Security Council and the major maritime users of the Indian Ocean in the work of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean, as this would facilitate the dialogue to advance peace, security and stability in the Indian Ocean region.

Since a similar draft resolution was last adopted at the fifty-second session, the heads of State or Government of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries have reaffirmed the validity of the objectives of the Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace and the importance of international cooperation to ensure peace, security and stability in the Indian Ocean region, calling for greater efforts and more time to facilitate discussions on practical measures to ensure conditions of peace, security and stability in the region. In this regard, the Non-Aligned Movement heads of State and Government called on the Chairperson of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean to continue his informal consultations on the Committee's future work. To this end, the draft resolution calls for the continuation of these consultations. The Non-Aligned Movement States expect that this draft resolution will again be supported by a large majority of Member States.

The fundamental objective of the draft resolution entitled "Observance of environmental norms in the drafting and implementation of agreements on disarmament and arms control", contained in document A/C.1/54/L.46, is to ensure compliance with relevant environmental norms when negotiating and implementing treaties and agreements related to disarmament.

The international community has long been aware of the detrimental consequences of uncontrolled radioactive sources and the risks associated with military activities involving nuclear materials. The dismantling of certain categories of weapons requires techniques and methods that

would sustain and augment the prevailing environmental standards.

While the draft resolution refrains from making any reference to specific disarmament agreements, it nonetheless calls upon States to take fully into account relevant environmental norms while negotiating arms control and disarmament treaties and agreements. It also calls for the application of advances made in science and technology in enhancing security and in facilitating disarmament without adverse impact on the environment ot to its effective contribution to attaining sustainable development. We remain hopeful that the draft resolution will be adopted by the Committee with the widest possible support.

Draft resolution A/C.1/54/L.47, entitled "Relationship between disarmament and development", underlines the importance of reallocating valuable resources released as a result of disarmament for development purposes and thereby reducing the gap between developed and developing countries. In the view of the non-aligned countries, this relationship has gained momentum and has indeed become relevant against the backdrop of the diversion of a large proportion of financial, material and technological resources to armaments, placing a heavy burden on the economies of many countries, especially the developing ones. The stark contrast between expenditure for armaments and the paucity of aid for socio-economic progress is also self-evident.

The draft resolution acknowledges the actions taken in the context of the Final Document adopted by the International Conference on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development and invites Member States to communicate their views and proposals for the implementation of the action programme adopted by that Conference. The Secretary-General is further requested to continue to take action for the implementation of that programme and to submit a report to the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session. We hope that this draft resolution will again be adopted without a vote.

As delegations may be aware, at its fifty-third session the General Assembly adopted by consensus resolution 53/77 AA, entitled "Convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament". Despite the fact that at its 1999 session the Disarmament Commission could not reach consensus on the objectives and agenda for a fourth special session devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV), members of the Non-Aligned Movement and other members of the international community continue to work towards the convening of that fourth special session. For that reason, the Non-Aligned Movement Foreign Ministers, during the recent Non-Aligned Movement ministerial meeting held in New York, reiterated the Movement's support for the convening of SSOD IV.

As in the past, draft resolution A/C.1/54/L.48, "Convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament", recalls the three previous special sessions on disarmament that were held during the period 1978 to 1988, and calls for further steps that would lead to the convening of the fourth special session with the participation of all Member States, subject to the emergence of a consensus on its objectives and agenda. Such a session would, *inter alia*, offer an opportunity to mobilize world public opinion for the elimination of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, as well as the control and reduction of conventional armaments.

Although the Disarmament Commission could not reach agreement on the objectives and agenda for SSOD IV, the sponsors of the draft resolution believe that these objectives can be further pursued through consultations with Member States by the Secretary-General on the objectives, agenda and timing of SSOD IV. As was the case with the resolution adopted at the fifty-third session, the members of the Non-Aligned Movement trust that this draft resolution will be adopted without a vote.

Draft resolution A/C.1/54/L.49 is entitled "United Nations regional centres for peace and disarmament", and such a draft resolution was adopted for the first time at the fifty-third session. It underlines the importance of all regional centres as mechanisms to inform, educate and generate public understanding and support in the field of arms control and disarmament. This draft resolution calls for not only the maintenance, but also the revitalization, of the three regional centres, in Nepal, Peru and Togo. The activities and programmes conducted by these regional centres make a valuable contribution towards changing basic attitudes to peace and security, to the identification of pertinent issues and approaches, especially through the organization of meetings and conferences, and to the promotion of regional and subregional dialogue on disarmament.

These centres seek to provide useful insights on common problems and thereby facilitate progress towards greater security at lower levels of armaments. They also serve as a useful forum for consideration of relevant issues and new approaches to arms limitation. The draft resolution

further requests Member States in each of these regions and those in a position to do so, as well as intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and foundations, to make voluntary contributions to the three regional centres so as to enable them to fulfil their role and to enhance their programmes and activities. It is the hope of the Non-Aligned Movement that the draft resolution will be adopted without a vote.

Finally, the draft decision, in document A/C.1/54/L.50, calls for the inclusion in the provisional agenda of the fifty-sixth session of the item "Review of the implementation of the Declaration on the Strengthening of International Security".

Mr. Coutts (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation remains firmly convinced of the vital need to convene a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

The changes in the international landscape that foreshadowed better prospects for international peace and security have not given rise to more peaceful coexistence among peoples; rather, tensions, uncertainties and local conflictshave heightened, with clear global repercussions and ramifications.

The new concepts of security, dual-use technology, qualitative changes in models and types of increasingly destructive weapons and the emergence of new doctrines that do not exactly favour a climate of disarmament are among the many elements that warrant the convening of such a special session.

It is not possible for us to allow, in addition to vast economic differences, the growth of strategic inequalities and insecurity of peoples. We are convinced of the urgent need to carry out an early review of this deplorable situation and to consider in this context the relationship between disarmament and development, as well as a new framework for human security. There is also a need for a global scrutiny of the worldwide arms trade carried out by the great Powers.

In this regard, we believe that only by strengthening international law, and specifically the powers of the International Court of Justice, based on the provisions of Article 26 of the Charter, can we put all the peoples of the world in a better position to have access to justice and peace.

For all these reasons, and many more, it would be wise to convene a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. Although the wording of paragraph 2 of draft resolution A/C.1/54/L.48 may not be ideal, it would at least make it possible to take a first step and give a mandate that no one can disregard.

Mr. Vasilyev (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): The delegation of the Republic of Belarus has the honour to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/54/L.26, under agenda item 65, "Prohibition of the development and manufacture of new types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons: report of the Conference on Disarmament". The draft resolution is sponsored by Armenia, Bolivia, Chile, Costa Rica, Egypt, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Ukraine, Viet Nam and Belarus.

The draft resolution proposes to use the Conference on Disarmament as a mechanism that would be brought into action when circumstances required. It is important that its adoption should not involve any financial implications.

The draft contains a reference to all previous General Assembly resolutions on the question of the prohibition of the development and manufacture of new types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons.

Moreover, it takes note of paragraph 77 of the Final Document of the tenth special session of the General Assembly. The draft emphasizes the determination of Member States to prevent the emergence of new types of weapons of mass destruction that have characteristics comparable in destructive effect to those of weapons of mass destruction identified in the definition of weapons of mass destruction adopted by the United Nations in 1948. In the preambular part it notes the desirability of keeping the matter under review, as appropriate.

In the substantive part of the document there is emphasis on the need for effective measures to avoid the emergence of new types of weapons of mass destruction. Paragraph 2 is particularly important. By that paragraph the General Assembly would request the Conference on Disarmament, without prejudice to further overview of its agenda, to keep the matter under review, as appropriate, with a view to making, when necessary, recommendations on undertaking specific negotiations on identified types of weapons. By paragraph 3 the Assembly would call upon all States to give favourable consideration to the recommendations of the Conference on Disarmament immediately following their presentation.

The General Assembly would go on to request the Conference on Disarmament to report the results of any consideration of the matter in its annual reports to the General Assembly. Finally, the General Assembly would decide to include on the provisional agenda of its fifty-seventh session an item entitled "Prohibition of the development and manufacture of new types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons: report of the Conference on Disarmament".

Without any exaggeration, it can be said that the draft resolution is a unique example of preventive diplomacy, proposing ways and means of responding to possible changes in this most important area. It contains concise, basic provisions already approved by the General Assembly. We feel, therefore, that the Committee can adopt it without a vote, as was the case three years ago, and we call upon delegations to proceed in this manner.

Mr. Sanders (Netherlands): As I am taking the floor for the first time, let me congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, and your Bureau on your election. We have full confidence in your competent leadership to guide us in this year's session of the First Committee.

I have the honour to introduce, on behalf of 93 sponsors, the well-known draft resolution on transparency in armaments, draft resolution A/C.1/54/L.39, under agenda item 76 (b).

Transparency in armaments is one of the major confidence-building principles which enable the international community to be better informed about military developments and thus diminish misperceptions and prevent the distortion of information.

It is important to note that the concept of transparency in armaments is not restricted to conventional armaments. The desirability of transparency applies as much to weapons of mass destruction as it does to conventional weapons. Nuclear, chemical and biological weapons mechanisms have their own agendas, however, sometimes maybe even new agendas. Important instruments have been developed, or are in the process of being developed, which provide, *inter alia*, a major contribution to transparency in the area of weapons of mass destruction. Multilateral treaties related to weapons of mass destruction are there, and there will be more of them in the future.

For conventional armaments, so far, there are only limited instruments available for increasing the degree of transparency. For certain very specific types of conventional arms, we have agreements, such as the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) or the Ottawa Convention. For certain regions, we have broader arrangements on conventional armaments, such as the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE Treaty), a fundamentally adapted version of which will, hopefully, be agreed upon in Istanbul at the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's summit meeting in November this year.

Another important regional arrangement for which I would like to express our great support and appreciation is the Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapons Acquisitions, which was approved on 26 May 1999. This Convention is a legally binding agreement that requires reporting on transfer and procurement of the same seven categories of conventional armaments as specified by the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms.

It is also a welcome development that initial steps are being taken within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to establish an extensive register and database on small arms and light weapons. We will continue to assist such efforts, and look forward to the establishment of such a register by early next year.

These important regional and subregional initiatives and arrangements on conventional armaments underpin the great contributions that regional organizations can make to transparency in armaments. Unfortunately, however, nothing comparable to the regional examples that I have mentioned exists at the global level, with two exceptions. One is the reporting on military expenditures, found within draft resolution A/C.1/54/L.27, submitted yesterday by Germany and Romania and strongly supported and co-sponsored by us. The other is the primary subject of this draft resolution: the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. Given the scarcity and limited nature of global arrangements on major conventional weapons systems, we should do our utmost not only to protect, but, more important, to improve and further develop the Register, both in terms of participation and in terms of scope and reporting.

The success of the Register has so far been mixed. After spectacular growth in participation and reporting in its initial years, we now see a certain levelling off. In a sense, this is a natural phenomenon, but, unfortunately, the lack of growth is also due to a number of drop-outs — countries that reported to the Register in the past, but no longer do so or have been inconsistent in their reporting.

However, the implementation of commitments has become relatively routine for approximately 80 regular participants, including nearly all of the main exporters and most of the major importers of major conventional arms.

A total of 144 States has participated at least once. The latest to join was Bangladesh, which I would like to congratulate most warmly and to which I say "Welcome to the Register!" Overall participation continues to increase gradually. In this context, I would repeat the appeal that Finland made on behalf of the European Union on the first day of our session. Those countries that have no transfers to report in a given year are expected to turn in the so-called nil report. If they do not, we will never know for sure whether or not transfers took place.

The Register has thus become reasonably well established. It has established a de facto norm of transparency in armaments which all Governments must take into account. It provides a significant amount of information which otherwise would not have been available. This information provides a legitimate basis for regional and international consultations between Governments. The Register also performs an important role in public information, putting pressure on accountability of the military and political leaderships. Finally, the Register has stimulated many Governments to improve their national systems for monitoring and controlling arms transfers.

These all seem important reasons to further develop and extend the Register. So far, however, there has been insufficient support among a number of key countries for expanding the Register to cover procurement for national production and military holdings. Nor has agreement as yet been possible on adjusting the scope of the seven categories of arms.

Most of the improvement in reporting has been achieved on a voluntary basis. Consequently, there is a continuing need for the Secretariat and actively interested States to encourage wider and more consistent participation. Such activities would help prepare the ground for the meeting of the group of governmental experts on the Register in 2000, as mentioned in operative paragraph 4 (b). In this context, I wish to express our sincere appreciation for the Secretariat's efforts in compiling and publishing the Register, in assisting Member States with submission of their reporting and in preparing the expert meetings.

One important question that the group of experts might consider is the possible role of the Register in the field of small arms and light weapons. Potentially, the Register could provide a unique tool for monitoring the transfer of certain types of light weapons with military specifications. The idea of connecting two previously unrelated arms control activities and creating a certain degree of synergy is a challenging one.

I sincerely hope that the First Committee will continue to give its widespread support to the draft resolution on transparency in armaments in general and to the Register of Conventional Arms in particular. We very much hope that in the near future we will once again have one consensus resolution on the subject of transparency in armaments.

Ms. Rovirosa (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Mexico is honoured to speak on behalf of the member countries of the Rio Group — Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela — on agenda item 76 (b), relating to transparency in armaments.

We believe that regional and multilateral efforts designed to limit and gradually reduce acquisitions of conventional weapons, in the context of a process aimed at general and complete disarmament, should be encouraged, taking into account the need of States to protect their security and keeping in mind the inherent right to self-defence enshrined in the United Nations Charter.

In order to facilitate the development and effective application of disarmament agreements, we need to encourage confidence-building measures among States, in particular those relating to transparency in arms procurement and stockpiles. In this spirit, at their eighteenth meeting the Foreign Ministers of the member countries of the Rio Group's permanent consultation and political coordination mechanism, held in Veracruz, Mexico, on 19 March 1999, stated their commitment to avoid arms races in the region and to work towards that objective by means of confidence- and security-building measures and by increasing cooperation between our countries.

We welcome the adoption of the Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapons Acquisitions at the twenty-ninth session of the General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS), on 7 June 1999, in Guatemala City. The purpose of that legal instrument is to enhance regional openness and transparency in the acquisition of conventional weapons by

exchanging information about such acquisitions in order to foster confidence between the States of the Americas.

In accordance with the provisions of the Convention, the States members of the OAS undertake to report annually their imports and exports in the previous calendar year of conventional weapons that come within the seven categories of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. Furthermore, they are to provide details of acquisitions stemming from national production.

An innovative aspect of the Inter-American Convention is that it permits any non-member State of the OAS to provide annual information on its exports of conventional weapons to States parties to the Convention. This information will make it possible to identify the importing State and the volume and type of conventional weapons being exported. It may include any relevant additional points, such as specifications and model.

We believe that the commitment made at the regional level should have a counterpart at the multilateral level. The Rio Group hopes that with the Convention's gradual entry into force more Member States from the hemisphere will provide the Secretary-General of the United Nations with information concerning exports and imports of such weapons.

We trust that the first meeting of the group of experts to be convened in 2000 to consider the continuing operation of the Register and its further development will be able to address broadly the measures required to secure transparency with regard to weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons. The ultimate objective of confidence-building among States cannot be limited in scope; to be really effective, it must cover the whole spectrum of weaponry.

Mr. Thapa (Nepal): In the light of the importance my delegation attaches to the problem of small arms and light weapons proliferation, I wish to recall its remarks made during the general debate in the Comittee. My delegation wishes to make the following additional observations on the subject, in the wake of the report (A/54/258) of the Secretary-General.

The role of the United Nations in raising the necessary awareness of the growing problem of small arms and light weapons has been commendable. My delegation welcomes the recent submission to this Committee of that comprehensive report, with useful recommendations prepared by the Group of Governmental Experts on Small Arms.

Despite the fact that small arms and light weapons do not cause the conflicts in which they are used, they can exacerbate and prolong the conflicts and increase their lethality. There is a close link between small arms and light weapons and insecurity. The easy circulation and transfer of such weapons impede post-conflict reconstruction endeavours and the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants.

The Secretary-General has rightly called small arms weapons of personal destruction, because they lead to the devastation of civilian populations. Their excessive accumulation is facilitated by low cost, easy availability and minimal maintenance. What is of particular concern is that hundreds of thousands of children below the age of 16 have been exploited as participants in armed conflicts in which small arms and light weapons are frequently used. As small arms and light weapons used in armed conflicts require a quick resupply of ammunition, strengthened controls on ammunition, its explosive components and manufacturing technology can play a crucial role in addressing the problem of small arms and light weapons proliferation.

The Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and Other Related Materials, of November 1997, is a worthwhile regional initiative. The scope of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms needs to be broadened to include small arms and light weapons. Ambassador Mitsuro Donawaki, Chairman of the Group of Governmental Experts on Small Arms, expressed optimism about the convening of an international conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects when presenting the Group's report a few days ago. My delegation shares this optimism.

Mr. Luck (Australia): I wish to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/54/L.16, "Report of the Conference on Disarmament". I understand that draft resolutions on this subject are customarily adopted by consensus.

This year we have prepared what we consider to be a straightforward and factual draft resolution very much in the spirit in which the annual report of the Conference was prepared.

The draft resolution notes the report of the Conference on Disarmament and refers to its importance as a forum for the multilateral negotiation of disarmament conventions. It

urges the Conference on Disarmament to fulfil that role and to try make early progress on its substantive work. The draft resolution also records the fact that the Conference has welcomed five new members in the past year and notes that the Conference recognizes that continuing consultations on the question of expansion of membership are desirable.

The draft resolution refers to the collective interest in commencing substantive work in the Conference as soon as possible and addresses the expectation that the President and the incoming President will conduct intersessional consultations to that end. It also urges the continuing review of the agenda and methods of work of the Conference.

As I said, the draft resolution is straightforward and relatively brief. I commend it for adoption.

Mr. Albuquerque (Portugal): I wish to refer, on behalf of Denmark, Greece, Luxembourg and Portugal, to document A/C.1/54/L.16, concerning the report of the Conference on Disarmament, which has just been introduced by the representative of Australia.

We recognize that the Conference on Disarmament is the only global multilateral disarmament negotiating forum for the international community and that it has a primary role in substantive negotiations concerning priority questions of disarmament. We therefore attach major importance to becoming a member of the Conference.

Rule 2 of the rules of procedure of the Conference on Disarmament provides that the membership of the Conference will be reviewed at regular intervals. The reason for this rule is clear. It stems from the tension between the limited membership of the Conference on the one hand and the universal scope of its task on the other. This task is to negotiate multilateral agreements in the field of disarmament designed to be adhered to by all States.

Therefore, we consider that the Conference on Disarmament should be open to all States that apply for membership. Only this approach will progressively eliminate the tension between limited membership and universality of the Conference activities. Enhancing the Conference's political legitimacy will facilitate the potential universality of the application of legal instruments produced by the Conference.

Each and every decision to move in this direction would therefore need to restate the principle of expansion as a dynamic and phased process in order to avoid the concept of "regular intervals" being wrongly applied.

As a result, our four Governments have expressed their support for the recent decision of the Conference on Disarmament to expand its membership by including five new members, on the understanding that this is an intermediate step in an ongoing process of phased Conference on Disarmament expansion to include all candidates.

The Conference on Disarmament should remain seized of this matter. As consensus was not reached, we reiterate that, as stated by Finland, on behalf of the European Union in the general debate, it is necessary to reappoint a special coordinator at the beginning of the 2000 session to consider this issue. In this context, we welcome the fact that draft resolution A/C.1/54/L.16 notes that the Conference on Disarmament recognizes the importance of continuing consultations on the review of its membership.

In conclusion, Denmark, Greece, Luxembourg and Portugal express the hope that these consultations will lead to a successful treatment of the question of the Conference's membership, to which they attach great importance.

Ms. Kunadi (India): My delegation wishes to introduce the draft resolution entitled "Reducing nuclear danger", contained in document A/C.1/54/L.31, sponsored by Bhutan, Mauritius, Fiji, the Sudan and India.

The delegation of India highlighted in the First Committee last year the fact that, with the end of the cold war more than a decade ago, there is no justification for thousands of nuclear weapons being maintained in a state of hair-trigger alert, creating unacceptable risks of unintentional or accidental use of nuclear weapons. This could have catastrophic consequences for all mankind.

Therefore, India took the initiative of introducing last year the draft resolution entitled "Reducing nuclear danger", which received widespread support in the General Assembly. It put forward a modest and practical proposal, calling for a review of nuclear doctrines and, in this context, immediate and urgent steps to reduce the risk of unintentional and accidental use of nuclear weapons.

Many nuclear-weapon States and their allies opposed the draft resolution on the grounds that there were a number of technical issues involved. While acknowledging

the technical complexities, we believe that these can be overcome through the necessary political commitment.

It is accepted that the elimination of nuclear weapons under a non-discriminatory and multilaterally verifiable treaty requires complex negotiation. However, there is no justification for thousands of nuclear weapons being maintained in a state of hair-trigger alert, creating an unacceptable risk of unintentional or accidental use that could have catastrophic consequences for all mankind. It is imperative that, as we prepare to enter the new millennium, the international community recognize and acknowledge the need for urgent, practical steps that will diminish the prospect of such a catastrophe.

In addition, the international community has legitimate cause for concern over what has been called the "Y2K problem", and is therefore entitled to have clear commitments from all nuclear-weapon States that the most important objective of their policies is to remove the danger of war and reduce the risk of accidental or unintentional use of nuclear weapons.

A number of programmes and measures to achieve global nuclear disarmament put forward by States, eminent individuals or non-governmental organizations have also attributed the highest priority to the need for steps to be taken to reduce the risk of unintentional or accidental use of nuclear weapons.

The 1996 Canberra Commission on the elimination of nuclear weapons identified the first step as taking nuclear forces off alert. A special statement made by the Pugwash Conference on the impasse in nuclear disarmament in 1998 made a similar call. Non-governmental organizations such as the Friends of the Earth, the Union of Concerned Societies, the Coalition to Reduce Nuclear Dangers, the Lawyers' Committee on Nuclear Policy, the Stimpson Centre and International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War have also called for removing the hair-trigger posture and standing alert of nuclear forces. The Tokyo Forum report also recognized the importance of moving in the direction of reducing the alert status of nuclear forces.

It is well known that there have been several instances of near accidental launch, often triggered by incomplete or inaccurate assessment of available information. These events demonstrate the error-prone character of maintaining large arsenals in a state of high alert.

My delegation therefore reintroduces the draft resolution this year with the expectation that the international community can take necessary action, both individually and collectively, to reduce the risks posed by hair-trigger-alert postures and related doctrines of use. In view of the urgency of the matter, we also propose in this year's draft resolution to request the Secretary-General to report to the next session of the General Assembly on information with regard to this issue, using existing resources, including input from the Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters.

In order to make the draft resolution as widely acceptable as possible, we have kept it simple and free from references to contentious issues. We believe that it advocates a desirable objective and hope that it will receive widespread support in the Committee.

Mr. Khairat (Egypt): I have pleasure in introducing the draft resolution submitted by Nigeria, the Sudan and Swaziland, as well as my own delegation, under agenda item 76 (b), entitled "Transparency in armaments", contained in document A/C.1/54/L.21.

Since the adoption in 1991 of resolution 46/36 L, which established the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, Egypt has always advocated the principle of transparency in military matters and has been supportive of the objectives underlying the establishment of the Register.

Egypt considers that transparency in all fields of armament represents a positive step and a solid confidence-building factor, but not an arms control measure. In this regard, we believe that transparency should facilitate tangible progress in the field of general and complete disarmament and that it has exceptional potential to contribute effectively to common efforts to achieve a higher degree of collective security among States. To realize this objective, Egypt participated in all panels of governmental experts set up following the adoption of the founding resolution, 46/36 L, and chaired the very first, pioneering Ad Hoc Committee on Transparency in Armaments at the Conference on Disarmament. We also coordinated the work of the Group of 21 on this issue.

The Register is, above all, a global undertaking that undoubtedly has a significant effect in both global and regional contexts. Egypt recognizes the Register in its current form as an important first step towards the promotion of transparency in all military matters. However, the evolutionary nature of this mechanism was made abundantly clear in resolution 46/36 L. It was clear then that there was a prescribed time-frame for such an

evolution to be completed, that being the work of the 1994 Group of Experts mandated to undertake this task.

Egypt is disappointed at the outcome of the work done by the Group of Experts not only in 1994, but also in 1997. In both cases it was unable to reach any agreement on related aspects of the further development of the Register.

Egypt is totally convinced that the principle of transparency should apply to all types of armaments, including all weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons, and the transfer of equipment and technology directly related to the development and manufacture of such weapons, as well as to high technology with military applications.

In this context, the priorities in the field of disarmament agreed to in the Final Document of the tenth special session of the General Assembly must be kept in mind when addressing either disarmament or collateral measures, such as transparency.

The achievement of transparency cannot be based on a selective approach. Such an approach is definitely counter-productive and would contribute to a loss of confidence and an inability to rely on the information which the Register provides in assessing the security needs of States.

As we were not impressed by the prospect of the possible eventual development of the Register in terms of the expansion of its scope since the adoption of resolution 46/36 L, we were neither willing nor able to continue to rely on a mere mirage of hope. It became an imperative need to introduce in 1997, along with other sponsors, a new resolution under the agenda item entitled "Transparency in armaments", aimed at addressing those aspects of the transparency issues which have not been adequately dealt with or reflected in the last three meetings of panels of experts.

The idea of expanding the scope of the Register in order to increase transparency related to weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons, was also introduced by other States. I quote here from the presentation made by Professor [Harald Muller before the meeting of the Programme for Promoting Nuclear Non-Proliferation, which took place during the period 12-14 March 1999:

"The concept of a nuclear arms register goes one step further. It was first issued by German Foreign Minister Kinkel in 1993, but strongly rebuffed by the three western nuclear-weapons States. However, the idea is worth reconsidering in the context of greater nuclear stability, arms reduction and disarmament."

In our draft resolution this year we request the Secretary-General, with the assistance of the Group of Governmental Experts to be convened in the year 2000, and taking into account the views submitted by Member States, to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session on the expansion of the Register to include military holdings, procurement through national production, delivery systems and transfer of armament technology, and to elaborate practical means for the development of the Register in order to increase transparency related to weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons, and to transfer equipment and technology directly related to the development and manufacture of such weapons.

The support received by the Egyptian draft last year, in particular the 104 votes in favour, is indeed tangible testimony to the fact that Egypt is not the only country concerned about the selective way in which the transparency issue has been handled so far. We hope that this year's draft will enjoy even greater support.

Mr. Calovski (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia): On behalf of the delegations of Andorra, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Liberia, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and my own delegation, I have the honour to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/54/L.40, under agenda item 84, "Review of the implementation of the Declaration on the Strengthening of International Security". The draft resolution is entitled "Maintenance of international security — stability and development of South-Eastern Europe".

Since 1993 the First Committee has been adopting resolutions concerning the situation in the Balkans, in South-Eastern Europe. The goal of our present proposal is to support the positive developments in the region and the efforts that have helped the region overcome its difficulties – political, social or economic; to promote disarmament and confidence-building measures in the region; and to enhance its integration into the Euro-structures.

This year the draft resolution also takes into account developments after the Kosovo conflict, specifically

Security Council resolution (1244/1999) and the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe, both adopted in June this year. The main thrust, therefore, of the draft resolution is the implementation of the Security Council resolution and the Stability Pact, and support for other positive efforts concerning the region with the same aim.

The draft resolution stresses some important basic needs for the region, such as development of good-neighbourly relations and overcoming problems by peaceful means, and affirms the need for observance of the main principles of the United Nations Charter. Its message concerns building a better future for the region as an important part of Europe. Thus, in operative paragraph 1 it reaffirms the urgency of the consolidation of South-Eastern Europe as a region of peace, security, stability, democracy, cooperation, economic development, observance of human rights and good-neighbourliness, thus contributing to the maintenance of international peace and security and enhancing the prospects for sustained development and prosperity for all peoples in the region as an integral part of Europe.

The sponsors of the draft resolution believe that the attainment of these goals is possible and deserves the support of the General Assembly and the international community.

As I stated earlier, the resolution has no financial implications and we hope it will be adopted without a vote. Its text is clear, and it is not really necessary for me to read it out or paraphrase either its preambular or operative part.

The sponsors are negotiating a few small changes in the text. We shall finish this process as soon as possible, and I hope that we can inform the Secretariat of the changes in good time.

I would like to express my great satisfaction to all delegations that have shown interest in and have supported this very important initiative for our region.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): At the beginning of this meeting a we circulated a detailed list of the clusters of draft resolutions on which action will be taken, if the Committee concurs, starting Monday next. The Chair takes the view that this clustering is a very practical and efficient way of tackling various items. We believe that in this way, we will be following an approach that will make our work more organized. If no delegation has an objection to the way in which the list is presented, we shall consider the list adopted and we shall proceed as indicated in the document that has distributed. As of Monday we shall begin taking action on draft resolutions, starting with draft resolution A/C.1/54/L.1.

To date a great number of draft resolutions have already been introduced. I urge delegations wishing to introduce other draft resolutions to do so as soon as possible, because we have only two more meetings reserved for this stage of our work, if we follow the course that we have decided to follow.

The meeting rose at 4.35 p.m.